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PRESERVING OUR WILD FLOWERS

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Early in the fall of 1916, the Pennsylvania state chapter of The Wild Flower Preservation Society of America was organized with a charter membership of twenty. Following the precedent established by other chapters of the national organization, a single officer only was elected, the secretary, who likewise acted as the executive head of the local chapter.

It is felt that a résumé of the work accomplished during the first year of its existence will be of interest and perhaps act as the inspiration for the establishment of similar local organizations. The chapter was organized under the auspices of the botanical department of the Pennsylvania State College. Because of its location in a college community, the opportunities presented for useful work were numerous. A prevalent custom among the students was to decorate the fraternity houses during house parties, receptions, etc., with mountain laurel, rhododendron and other evergreen foliage. Since their social events were sufficiently numerous to prove a serious drain upon the wild flora, a request was sent to each of the fraternity houses, asking that this custom be discontinued. The request was met in a cordial manner with the result that the practice was cut down to the minimum and a large number of such slow-growing evergreens as the mountain laurel and rhododendron were saved for the enjoyment of the students of the future. In addition many citizens of the town, who had previously never given the subject serious thought, refrained from utilizing the desirable wild vegetation for decorative purposes, substituting in its place when

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possible such weedy but handsome plants as the numerous goldenrod, asters, etc., thereby contributing their mite toward aiding the farmer with his weed problem.

Another practice, now practically discontinued as a result of the efforts of the society, was the custom of using ground-pine, *Lycopodium* sp., pipsissewa, *Chimaphila umbellata*, and spotted wintergreen, *Chimaphila maculata*, at receptions, teas and other social functions for the purpose of pinning specimens of the plants on the guests. This custom led to a serious depletion of the spotted wintergreen in the college woods until the species became almost extinct in the vicinity. It is now sincerely hoped that the erstwhile abundant flora of these plants will be speedily replenished by natural means.

The immediate vicinity of the college was, until about ten years ago, well stocked with wild growth of arbutus; the supply was so plentiful that one needed but tramp for a few minutes from the main building in order to obtain an abundant supply. Due to the foolish custom of pulling out the long, creeping stems of the plant, arbutus soon disappeared from the vicinity, until it is necessary now for the students to tramp several miles in order to obtain a sufficient supply for tokens to mothers, sisters and sweethearts, in the spring of the year. The writer well remembers the profusion of arbutus which ornamented Shingleton Gap, a beautiful mountain pass, about three miles from the college, but a few years ago. The entire gap has been so stripped of the "sweetest flower that grows" that the plant is practically extinct, since a careful search failed to reveal a single specimen in the entire gap during the spring of 1917. The efforts of the society, by means of lectures, printed statements and chapel appeals, has attempted to educate the student body to pick the flowering stems only and thus allow the propagating stem to remain and so flower from year to year. Arbutus seeds in the vicinity of State College; although but few seeds are ordinarily matured, it is felt that sufficient flowers are overlooked to provide the necessary seed for reproduction purposes, since the late-blooming flowers are seldom picked. By the means just described it is hoped to save arbutus as a valuable heritage of nature for the pleasure and profit of the generations of the future.

A veritable treasureland of botanical wonders is Bear Mountain, a huge Sphagnum bog located in the mountains about sixteen miles from the college. Here may be found such botanical gems as the high-bush huckleberry or swamp blueberry, *Vaccinium corymbosum*, the dainty twayblade, *Listera cordata*, the almost extinct (in this region) American larch or tamarack, *Larix americana*, various species of handsome trilliums, and the absorbingly interesting insectivorous plants, the pitcher plant, *Sarracenia purpurea*, and the sundew, *Drosera rotundifolia*. The Meadows, as the place is popularly known, is a favorite objective of Sunday "hikes" and a popular rendezvous of nature-loving students, consequently the flora has suffered to a considerable extent. This is especially true of the pitcher plants, which are threatened with total extinction, since at the present writing only a few survivors remain of a formerly abundant flora. Following an exhibition last spring of pitcher plants brought in from Bear Meadows and placed in the window of a local merchant, parties were organized for the express purpose of hunting these interesting plant curiosities, and the lone survivors were placed in serious jeopardy. The chapter immediately launched a campaign for the protection of the pitcher plant, a campaign which it is hoped saved the plant from total extinction.

Another plant which has received the special attention of the society is the gorgeous pink lady's slipper, *Cypripedium acaule*, a species formerly abundant, but now rare because of thoughtless picking. Its relative, the handsome yellow lady's slipper, *Cypripedium parviflorum*, was until recent times a not uncommon member of the local flora; today it is absolutely extinct in the vicinity. It is hoped that the pink species will not meet with the regrettable fate of its unfortunate relative.

The efforts of the local chapter have been extended along many lines. During the first year of existence, over thirty lectures were given to various groups, including fraternities, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, the Woman's Club, the student body of the Bellefonte Academy, farmers' wives and various rural organizations. For this purpose a set of beautifully colored lantern-slides was used. The slides were collected from various sources, many

of them having been purchased from the Stokes collection for the Protection of Our Native plants prepared at the New York Botanical Garden. Some of these slides were used during the early spring in an appeal for the protection of the flowers staged through the courtesy of the local moving-picture theater. This method proved an effective means of advertising the objects of the society. The pictures, with their accompanying appeal, were exhibited for an entire week, a change of slides being made daily. The local plants most urgently in need of protection were all thus brought to the attention of the citizens of the town.

The use of the press was not neglected in the work of the chapter. One thousand reprints of a previously published paper relating to the protection of the wild flora* were distributed among the newspapers and other periodicals of Pennsylvania. The appeal received country-wide circulation due to its recognition by the American Review of Reviews, which reviewed the article at length in the July number, 1916.

The influence exerted by the society may well be illustrated by an incident which occurred in the spring of 1917. While home during the Easter vacation, one of the students entered into a pact with a Philadelphia florist to supply annually 75,000 fern fronds as a means of securing money to pay the expenses of college. The fronds were to be collected in the mountains surrounding the college, with no regard for the future of these slow-growing plants. Learning of the work of the Wild Flower Society, the student consulted the organization before attempting this wholesale depredation on the beauty of the local flora. Needless to say, the contract with the florist was never filled. Had such an attempt been allowed, the ferns of the region would have been in grave danger of extermination before the graduation of the student, a shameless encroachment upon the rights of others. Though in this instance the removal of the ferns would no doubt have greatly benefited the individual student, the doctrine of the greatest good for the greatest number demanded in all fairness that the fern flora remain undisturbed for the enjoyment of the nature-lovers of the future. The Pennsylvania

* Our Disappearing Wild Flowers, by Albert A. Hansen, The Pennsylvania State Farmer, May, 1916.

State Chapter has always tried to foster the spirit that each generation has inherited a bountiful gift of nature, a gift which should be accepted in guardian spirit. We are the trustees of the world's resources, be they birds, animals, minerals or plants, and as trustees we should spend wisely and should not squander or waste; much less should we rob posterity of the blessings which we now enjoy.

The Pennsylvania State Chapter has many ambitious plans for the future, plans for the establishment of a prize-fund for flower-conservation essays in the high schools of Pennsylvania, the instituting of popular, non-technical botanical expeditions to study the rich mountain flora surrounding the college and various other useful projects. During the organization of the chapter the writer was elected to the office of secretary. His recent affiliation with the United States Department of Agriculture has placed the burden of the active work of the chapter on the willing shoulders of the professor of botany of the Pennsylvania State College, under whose able leadership the organization should prosper and flourish.

LIST OF PENNSYLVANIA PLANTS URGENTLY IN NEED OF PROTECTION

All wild lilies, arbutus, bluebells (*Mertensia*), bird's-foot violet, bunchberry, bloodroot, blue-eyed grass, columbine, cardinal-flower, cowslip, cat-tail, clintonia, Dutchman's breeches, dog's-tooth violet, fringed gentian, flowering dogwood, fringed milkwort, ground pines, hepatica, iris, jack-in-the-pulpit, mountain honeysuckle (*Azalea*), maiden-hair fern, mountain laurel, nannyberry, painted cup, pink lady's slipper, pitcher plant, rhododendron, sweet bay, showy orchis, spring beauty, star flower, spicebush, trillium, twayblade, various ferns, water lily, wild pink, wintergreen, wind flower (rue anemone), wood anemone, wild strawberry, winterberry, wild geranium (cranesbill), walking fern, yellow lady's slipper, yellow pond lily, yellow star grass, yellow fringed orchid.